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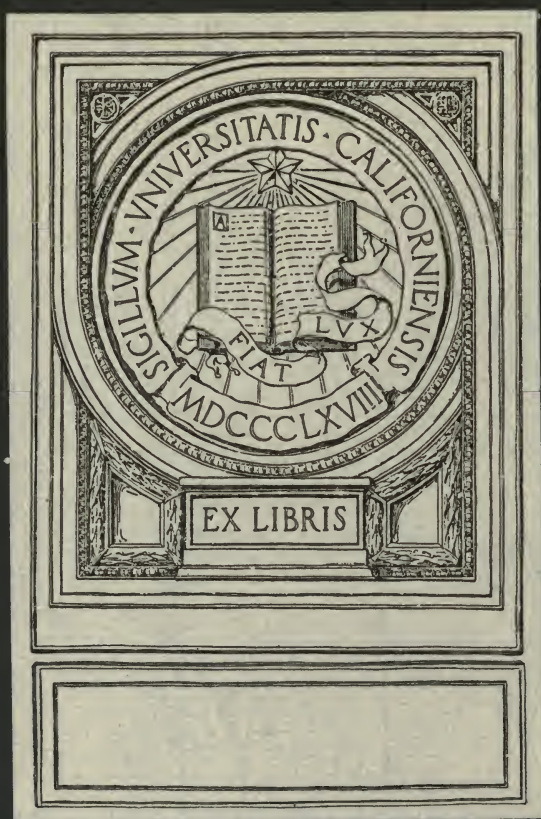
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ON TAKING POLITICS SERIOUSLY

BY

WILLIAM LOFTUS HARE

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ON TAKING POLITICS SERIOUSLY.

SYNOPSIS.

A.—*The Nature of Politics.*

1. A popular conception.
2. Politics a general and necessary vocation.
3. Aristotle's definition.
4. Politics founded in Nature.
5. The impossibility of "non-politics" or Anarchism.

B.—*A Question in Philosophy.*

1. What is meant by "Nature"?
2. Is Chaos or Cosmos primary and fundamental?
3. The Universe on every plane an expression of Order.
4. Order is primary; disorder secondary.

C.—*The Significance of Order.*

1. In Morality.
2. In Nature.
3. In Art.
4. A definition of Order.
5. The impulses of Politics are supplied by Nature, they are expressed in Society according to Morality.

D.—*Ordination in Politics Primary, struggle Secondary.*

1. A true conception of history.
2. Politics a necessary and continuous extension of the positive and primary work of man, which is an administration to the necessities placed on man by Nature.

E.—*Ideal and Actual Politics.*

1. The difficulty of holding to the Ideal.
2. The psychological basis of party strife.
3. The criterion of judgment for Politics.
4. True and false Politics.
5. Partisans antagonise but statesmen synthesise oppositions.
6. Threefold interests in contemporary Politics.

F.—*Four Aspects of Politics.*

1. Constitutional, or the structure of Society.
2. Industrial, or the maintenance of Society.
3. Legislative, or the perfection of its order.
4. Executive, or the expression of its order.
5. The material basis of all Politics.

G.—*Manners in Politics.*

1. Considering things on their merits.
2. The Good Mind, the Evil Mind.
3. The long view.
4. Faith in Politics.

H.—*Politics and the Soul.*

1. Politics in evolution.
2. What Religion demands of Politics.

ON TAKING POLITICS SERIOUSLY.

THE NATURE OF POLITICS.

THE general conception of Politics shared by the people of our own day has not, so far as I have observed, included as necessary to its practical part any previous element of theoretical study. A similar observation has been made of ancient states. Socrates said of his fellow-citizens that while for every specific art a man needed to be trained, and would not think of interfering until he had undergone the necessary discipline, yet for Politics, everyone was at all times ready to advise on matters of the utmost importance. There is probably a good reason for this readiness for Politics, which, when once perceived, may take the edge off the Socratic criticism. Each of the arts may be regarded as a special and optional vocation, but Politics, because it is an extension of domestic economy, is a universal and necessary vocation. If everyone were to know this at least, politics would rest on a theoretically true basis.

My first task is to make good the proposition that Politics, to whatever degree it may have become artificial, is, nevertheless, rooted and grounded in Nature; and I do this by an appeal to history and philology.

Just as the history of a word provides a revelation of its meaning, so it is in the case of an institution, or an all-pervading custom; and we turn naturally to the Greeks for an account of Politics, both the word and the thing.

In their migrations and settlements, the Greeks were organised in the following manner: The unit of society was the family

(*genos*); unions of families made the clans (*phratritai*); unions of clans made the tribes (*phylai*); a union of tribes made the city or state (*polis*); and beyond this society all was alien or barbaric. Each family, clan, tribe, and city was an intensely religious and exclusive secret society. In the home, the head of the family ruled absolutely: he was the priest at the family shrine; he regulated the ritual of worship; controlled the occupation, property, person, and even the life of each individual member. As the family increased, successive generations branching out, the paternal authority was still maintained, so that there was always a master to the house, a chief for the clan, a leader for the tribe, and a king for the city.

Aristotle, one of the most careful and impartial observers of antiquity, admirably defines the nature of the state in his treatise on Politics: "Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims, and in a greater degree than any other, at the highest good."

"The family is the association established by Nature for the supply of men's everyday wants, and the members of it are called by Charondas 'companions of the cupboard,' and by Epimenides the Cretan 'companions of the manger.' But when several families are united, and the association aims at something more than the supply of daily needs, then comes into existence the village. And the most natural form of the village appears to be that of a colony from the family composed of the children and grandchildren, who are said to be 'suckled with the same milk.' And this is the reason why Hellenic states were originally governed by kings; every family is ruled by the eldest, and therefore in the colonies of the family the kingly form of government prevailed, because they were of the same blood."

"When several villages are united in a single community, perfect and large enough to be nearly or quite self-supporting, the *polis* comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life. And therefore, if the earlier forms of society are natural, so is the state, for it is the end of them, and the (completed) nature is the end. Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by

nature, and not by mere accident, is without a state, is either above humanity or below it.”*

There can be no doubt that Nature provided not merely the personnel of any primitive state, but that she dictated the chief conditions of existence, and even furnished the *Politikos* or statesman as the necessary director. It is not perhaps sufficiently noticed that a great part of the life of the average man, namely, his childhood, youth, and old age, is passed in a state of comparative irresponsibility and dependence upon society. These being the conditions that Nature has laid down, we see the necessity for social government of some kind—that is, for the State and for Statesmen. Nature has made the *polis* and politics, and no one can escape from them legitimately until he has escaped from Nature.

A QUESTION IN PHILOSOPHY.

Before taking our next step, we must make a brief excursion into the domain of philosophy, ask a question there, and, if possible, obtain an answer. Having shown that Politics is founded in Nature, we must inquire what Nature is. Such a query is by no means unreasonable, if alone from the fact that there are offered to us at least two fundamental conceptions of Nature, in seeming opposition. The older, the teleological view, expressed by various ancient mythologies and religions, regards the world and all that is in it as having been constructed with intelligence, purpose, and power. The newer view was advanced during the nineteenth century by the great evolutionists Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Marx. By these writers the phenomenon of the struggle for existence was seized upon and made fundamental to life, and it was not long before its laws were applied to every department of human experience, including that specially concerning us now, namely, Politics. History, said the Marxian materialists, was the record of universal contest, and economics was its subject-matter. Everything could be explained, they said, by the craving for food and the means taken to satisfy it.

While not desirous of raising, in its original form, an issue that is popularly supposed to have been settled, I nevertheless feel that we must redetermine the problem for ourselves. Is the universe evolved from primitive chaos? Are ordination, subordination, and co-ordination merely incidents occurring in an Armageddon of disorderly elements? Is the work of Nature *primarily* a warfare, and only *secondarily* a peace secured by

* Aristotle's Politics (Jowett) p. 23, 27, 28.

exhaustion, fear, or degeneration? Does Nature, as exemplified in man, merely heal wounds the better to inflict them? If we say "no" to these questions we must look for an alternative explanation of phenomena that bulk so largely in life as to lead many to say "yes." We must advance another hypothesis, namely, that the universe is primarily a cosmos, with some tendencies towards chaos: that it is in the highest degree and on every plane, *an expression of order*, and whatever declension from order there be is only transitory and secondary; it ministers to, and calls forth, the greater powers of the cosmos, in which, again and again, it is swallowed up. This view, which we may call the occult view, has often been set forth mythologically, and the time may not be far distant when a scientific demonstration of it may become possible.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ORDER.

Difficult as it is, here and now, to make a demonstration of this general proposition, I will state briefly the elements of what I think would be the line it would take. A definition of order, of whatever rank, has been offered in the following terms: order is the supreme measure of perfection in objects of the same kind. It consists in the adaptation of parts to each other in subserviency to the ends of the whole.

The three orders of the cosmos that are concerned in Politics are the Order of Nature, the Moral Order, and the Order of Art.

(a) *The Order of Nature* is the order of that part of the universe which is subject to generation and corruption—the realm of change. Man belongs corporeally to Nature.

(b) *The Order of Art* is the totality of distinctly human, *i.e.*, volitional relationships, activities, and productions, together with modifications of natural objects, and arrangements resulting from these being made subservient to man. In the artificial order things are because man thinks them.

(c) *The Moral Order* signifies that there is *due* to each particular thing all that is ordained to it, and there is *due from* it the perfect service of that towards which it is ordained, the contribution of its due share towards the higher order under which it normally falls.

It is now necessary to summarise the theme set forth above.

(a) Order (*i.e.*, ordination, subordination, and co-ordination to their highest degrees) is the primary and fundamental fact of life; it is derived from the deeper metaphysical relationship of all existences in a realm where they are harmoniously united.

(b) Disorder (*i.e.*, inordination and struggle) is secondary and incidental; it is a falling away from order, and is derived from the persistent, though possibly diminishing, egoism allowed by Nature to all the existences of its order.

(c) The struggle derived from pain and the pain dependent upon struggle are indicative of the declension from order and the effort to return thereto. Thus it becomes part of a higher order that includes both it and the order from which the existences in question have fallen or are tending to fall.

ORDINATION IN POLITICS PRIMARY, STRUGGLE SECONDARY.

We are now able to return to the mundane realm armed with the reply to our interrogation—a reply which is rendered less dogmatic than it might have been had we not ascended in search of it. If we have found truths as to Life, we have found truths as to Politics also; for the greater includes the less.

Our theory demands a reconsideration of the popular conception of history. Here, again, the positive, primary, and permanent activity of the race is industry rising out of necessity, reaching higher degrees of association and co-ordination, until visible social organisms are produced. Struggle, warfare, and breach of association are negative, secondary, and occasional activities of the race.

Literary historians have of late recognised that the history of a people is the record of its aspirations, its efforts, the immaterial and material work of its genius, rather than the dramatic display of the acts of its rulers and statesmen. It is therefore an easy transition from history in general to Politics in particular, of which we may repeat the same formulæ. I merely ask a question to which the answer will already be anticipated. Is not true Politics the necessary extension of what has been found to be the positive, primary, and continuous work of man? Is it not the effort towards the increase of relation, to the increase of order, and, consequently, to the increase of life?

But, in view of what we see going on in the political arena, it scarcely seems possible to hold the belief just expressed: a casual glance at modern politics would lead us to a very different conclusion. We see a striving for individual or class advantage, an egoistic whirlpool, full of deceit, bluff, violence, and hatred; a use of flattery, rhetoric, expediency and falsehood; a grand effort to score victories for family, group, class, trade, nation, or race. These seem to make up the popular conception of Politics. Yet

these are merely the negative aspect of Politics as positively formulated.

IDEAL AND ACTUAL POLITICS.

Politics must be conceived of first in its ideal aspect as the science and art of managing the affairs of the state. This aspect is essentially the concern of the wise and the far-seeing, but they need not necessarily be the few, and it is both desirable and possible that their number should increase. But many such men find themselves precipitated into the turmoil of political strife, in which the ideal aspect of Politics becomes obscured, and the actual aspect alone is perceived. We ought to be able to find an explanation for this.

The contest of Politics seems to rest on two bases—on temperament and on interest. I am by no means certain whether the temperamental distinction is not the more powerful of the two, so far as the formation and maintenance of parties is concerned. We are familiar with the statement so often made, and so obviously true, that rival “Front Benchers” in all the Parliaments of the world have practically the same material interests. If they are, as generally, drawn from the governing classes, their education and economic status are not the causes of their opposition. Of the rank and file of the parties the same may be said. Landed gentry, financial magnates, capitalists, professional and legal men, not to mention the services, are found distributed more or less evenly in the hostile political camps. It cannot be their material interests that divide them, and yet material interests *do* divide men, as the witness of to-day so abundantly proves.

It is worth while trying to discover to what extent temperament is responsible for the phenomenon of party warfare. Although rival programmes are from time to time presented to the people, it is not always easy to discern in them fundamentally opposite principles. There seems to be no very clear-cut distinction between the *propositions* of one great party and those of the other. True, what one advances the other opposes for a time, but on the other hand, the measures carried by each are to a great extent representative of a continuity of policy appropriate to the moral and economic development of a given nation. Often enough the contest is to determine which party shall have the direction of an almost inevitable policy. I think we have to look deeper than the declarations of party leaders if we would gain a true idea of what it is that distinguishes them. Even though they may not

be aware of it, I believe it is a difference of temperament which separates the older "conservative" tendency from the newer "liberal" one.

The basic principle of a conservative tendency in any country of which we have knowledge is surely the egoist-national one. Must we not admit that Monarchical Conservative sections of each European nation are frankly, and with a clear moral conscience, egoistic? Self-preservation, preservation of the dynasty and of the dynastic supporters; conservation of the economic advantages heretofore gained by the classes successful in the struggle for life; conservation, consequently, of the national organisation that has facilitated those successes makes these people essentially "patriotic" and "nationalist," as they are generally called. Their position is easily defended. They are always sure of a response to their call to arms. Militarism is their natural bent. They are troubled by no philosophic or altruistic doubts; the thoughts of internationalism appear to them to be disruptive and dangerous, and, from their point of view, probably are so.

On the other hand, the newer temperament that makes itself manifest in life, and consequently in Politics, is rightly called "liberal" all the world over. It takes certain venturous risks along paths that are by no means sure of success. It usually enfranchises the masses, defends its proposals from a distinctly ethical and sometimes noble elevation, seeing visions and possibilities of reformation which either from necessity or from sincerity it attempts to realise. But it has to be admitted that this philosophic temperament is by no means uncorrupted. The egoistic motive in nearly all men is strong and virile, and is so by Nature. Further, the leaders of liberal parties, the world over, if they would gain *power to liberalise*, dare not leave the main body of egoistic thought and feeling too far behind. To use a military term, it is their "strategic base," from which they occasionally emerge; for even if there are among their ranks visionaries, philosophers, and altruists, many of these, when in power, "toe the line" with the big-navy nationalists. They, however, bring their democratic instincts to the task of reorganisation of the defences of their various national spheres of influence. It is for these reasons that while at root there is a fundamental distinction of philosophic temperament, yet in actual political practice, and still more in party warfare, there is not much that will lead a man of feeling to choose one as his party rather than another.

I may not have been able to convince my readers as to the correctness of the view I take. If not, I throw upon them the duty of explaining what becomes of the undoubted deep divergence of temperament, and all that it signifies in life, the moment that people, so diverse, enter upon political functions. Does it mysteriously disappear? Or do not its impulses reappear and colour the opposition and clash of party warfare? In order to illustrate this point, let us suppose the people of a given nation and epoch to be represented by a cube cut in vertical and horizontal sections. The vertical sections would show degrees of temperamental difference, while the horizontal sections would show degrees of material opposition. Thus there are in *actual* Politics at least two eternal battles: the struggle of feeling against feeling and of interest against interest. Now, if it be the ideal function of the moral philosopher to conciliate and synthesise the opposing temperaments bequeathed by Nature, is it not also the ideal duty of the statesman to synthesise the rival interests in the battle for material welfare? If he cannot do this, what is he for?

We are now able to perceive the point at which ideal and actual Politics touch. Before the eyes of the person who takes Politics seriously there appear—

- (1) the ideal of perfect social human co-ordination;
- (2) the fact of imperfect social human co-ordination;
- (3) the necessity of approximating the actual towards the ideal for the sake of life and happiness—a demand both of the intuition and the reason;
- (4) the possibility, out of the circumstances of any given moment, of making a certain advance.

I say this to encourage those people who are always waiting for Utopia, as if nothing could be done till men are perfect—by which time, of course, nothing will be necessary. True Politics, so far from necessitating Utopian perfection as a first condition, must come into being in the absence of it. It is because of the tendency of the Nature struggle towards the inordinate that man's intellect and goodwill are set to devise a true polity to correct the blind impulses that Nature supplies.

What, then, can be a criterion for the person who takes Politics seriously? Not the criterion of Nature—against which, in a sense, he is working. Not the survival of the fittest and the few, but

the welfare of the whole society—in all its ranks—of which, through Nature and institution, he is a member.

It is not difficult to find a formula expressive of the statesman's nature and duty; but is it easy to find the man to fit the formula? Let us see. The statesman is one who understands the divergent emotional impulses and material interests of different persons, groups, classes, or nations, who turns them inward, synthesises them, makes them contribute towards a higher co-ordination than that hitherto attained. The mere "politician" is one who emphasises and turns outwards into greater opposition the impulses of rival interests and nations, generally with a view to his personal welfare.

But the statesman's work must be discriminating, and even the partisan may adopt the statesman's rôle and see beyond the momentary triumph of his cause. Often enough, and particularly now, as I think, the group struggle can be directed towards attaining its own ends (in accordance with both justice and necessity), and that of the higher and larger whole as well.

The true statesman may emphasise the claims of an oppressed class, industry or nation, to subserve both the particular and the general interests. If A and B are struggling in the industrial-political sphere, each for his own hand, the mere partisan will support A or B. But the statesman, guided by an independent status and a longer vision, may support A against B (or *vice versa*) for the purpose of gaining the general welfare. Thus he follows no mechanical formula, but exercises on each occasion a responsible judgment. Thus the person who takes Politics seriously will by no means be found permanently seated among the contemplative gods, but often in the arena itself. He will always have a longer view than that of mere class or party victory. He is always himself fully aware, and can make it clear to others, that his is the *primary* activity of creating order, and such a criterion will endue him with wisdom and directness almost infallible. But the moment he corrupts his activity and views with personal ambition or class hatred, using the arrows of passion or sophistry for his own or his group's purposes, he becomes blinded, and wisdom flees from him. In true Politics, honesty is the *only* policy.

FOUR ASPECTS OF POLITICS.

Having, I hope, made clear the main ideas of my theme, I now consider the nature of the society in which Politics operate.

There is, first, its *constitutional* framework, which is a matter of growth and change. There is, second, its *industrial* maintenance, which is the first act of man in discovering the necessities which press upon him and the ever-present activity of his existence. The dominant mode of industry determines the nature of the other elements of Politics. It is here that the importance of the *right* mode appears. Socialists contend that their economic principles are now essential to the maintenance of modern social states. The third aspect of politics is the *legislative*, and refers to the processes of perfecting the order of society. It may be imagined that the representatives of the people, and they alone, will be able to detect disordination as it occurs, to discuss measures for remedying the evil, and will agree to acts of the legislature by way of correction. I fear, however, it is largely a matter of imagination. Elected representatives neglect their chief function.

Statute alone is inadequate to meet the need of society for perfecting its order. The term "legislation," in the sense in which I use it, includes the whole body of evolving custom and common law which is supplied by the genius of the people; the people must become politicians without necessarily being parliamentarians; they can, and often do, legislate in a very real sense, without being voted into office. In this respect they have not yet realised their power.

The fourth aspect of Politics is the *executive*, and refers to the expression of the social order. The Government, properly considered, are not the rulers of society, but the holders of offices conferred by society.

The person who takes Politics seriously observes the evolution of industrial and economic processes, recognises that they are the *material basis of Politics*, and that upon them depends every phase of its life. If either the constitution or the executive hinders the beneficial development of national industry, he seeks to reform them, but always with the primary end in view of liberating industry. He is thus gifted with a wisdom beyond that of mere dynasts or partisans, and his plans do not miscarry, though they may be delayed.

The political problem overshadowing all others in the modern world is that of industrial unrest. The industry which maintains the whole of society is the work of the bulk of its adult members. Consequently they should not merely be honoured and maintained, but rather enabled to maintain themselves in

freedom and decency. The whole conception of labour needs to be changed. Men do not now need merely the right to *sell their work*, but *the right to work in response to their necessity*. Thus it happens that all modern statesmen are faced with the demand of a class, which they must meet, both for the sake of that class and for the welfare of society. They have not merely to allay or chloroform the unrest, but to find its causes and provide means for their eradication.

MANNERS IN POLITICS.

Not the least significant aspect of the ideal scheme of Politics is that of manners. Manners are not superficial; they are part of the adaptation of social units to social ends. There is a very widespread opinion that people may adopt manners in Politics that are not permitted in other walks of life. If I am right in my contention that Politics is a general and necessary vocation, much wider than parliamentarism, why is it that relatively good behaviour is assumed to be desirable for life, but the worst of manners permissible in Politics? People should discipline themselves in manners, in feeling, in thinking, in reasoning, in speaking, if they would be truly effective in Politics. But nowadays the readiest scene-makers get the most notoriety, instead of earning the most disapproval. We want to found a new tradition to replace the old one. Bad manners are bad Politics. The person who takes Politics seriously has faith and vision. He does not mistake violence for power, rhetoric for reason, applause for justification, or success for finality.

Bad manners in Politics may be traced to a generally diffused Evil Mind, a faculty for seeing and representing things as they are not. Its most popular expression is the imputation of motives other than those declared. A statesman proposes a measure to meet some situation admittedly serious, and gives his reasons for it. Those are immediately exposed as fraudulent, and the battle rages on a new issue that prevents men from judging the original proposal on its merits. In science and commerce the latter way is the only way—in life it is the only way; but politicians have evolved an alternative method of judging legislative proposals by some new criterion, such as whether it will win or lose a by-election, or something else quite unconnected with the proposition. Parliament, the press and the platform are given over now to vituperation and intellectual *sabotage*.

Obviously the only remedy for the Evil Mind is the Good Mind. Everyone knows what it is, so I need hardly explain it. To carry the private mind into public affairs is all that is needed.

The private mind is substantially rational and good. The evil mind misvalues the well-known things. Genuine philanthropy is called "grandmotherly," as if there were no such thing as the sincere love of man. Peacefulness is called "weakness"; impartiality is called "indifference"; and anyone who outfaces his party for a higher cause is called a "traitor."

POLITICS AND THE SOUL.

In addition to the outer necessities of man's nature, to which true Politics should minister, there are certain very clamant inner necessities which must be satisfied. There is a relation between politics and religion which appears more clearly when true conceptions are formed as to what each of these is. Politics, we have found, is the art of creating order in a limited social sphere, the adaptation of parts to the ends of the whole. Religion is similarly, but more extensively, the adaptation of the soul to the universal order. Religion necessarily demands conditions favourable to its own consummation. Every great religious movement has with dynamic force striven to create a polity appropriate to its nature, suitable for its persistence. From the highest point of view, Politics is an instrument for the use of the soul. The man who sees this has the longest and truest view, and may say with Whitman :—

Lo ! keen-eyed towering science,
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking
Successive absolute flats issuing.

Yet again, lo ! the soul above all science,
For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,
For it the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.

In spiritual routes by long detours,
(As a much-tacking ship upon the sea).
For it the partial to the permanent flowing,
For it the real to the ideal tends.



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